DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 048 JC 750 193

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TITLE On What Basis Do Students Select Coursework in Black Studies?
PUB DATE Jan 74
NOTE 28p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *African American Studies; Course Content; Course Descriptions; Cultural Education; *Curriculum Development; *Enrollment Influences; *Junior Colleges; Social Environment; Student Needs; *Student Opinion; Urban Environment

ABSTRACT

This report attempts to establish the conditions under which students will choose to enroll in Black Studies courses. Out of 500 Black Studies students at Santa Ana College, 100 were randomly chosen to answer questionnaires regarding motivation for course selection and personal educational needs. A 100 percent response rate was reported for both questionnaires. The data indicates a tendency of students (53 percent) to choose Black Studies courses on the basis of the personal need for better understanding of their environment and its institutions. Of the respondents 17 percent indicated that they choose Black Studies courses to satisfy program requirements, and 16 percent select courses on the basis of the instructor. On the basis of the findings, curriculum recommendations are made. (AH)

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ON WHAT BASIS DO STUDENTS SELECT COURSEWORK IN BLACK STUDIES?

by

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A REPORT PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

JC 750 193

NOVA UNIVERSITY

January 31, 1974

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a demonstrable need for the introduction of a more rational approach to the development of Black Studies curriculum.

The proliferation of Black Studies proposals from all sections of the United States leave little doubt about student--and sometimes faculty and administrative--demands or suggestions for the introduction of "relevant" Black Studies courses. But, despite demands, hardline stands, and suggestions favoring Black Studies, the question continually looms to the foreground: In which direction should Black Studies curriculum be developed?

There are a number of factors to be considered in determining curriculum development in any area. However, to avoid using an approach that is likely to be too global in scope, this investigation deals with a concern upper-most in the minds of those involved in Black Studies programs; Under what conditions will students choose to enroll in Black Studies courses?[1]

The information gathered in this report reflects the students' perceptions of the issues involved.

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[1]Vincent Harding, at National Association of Black Urban and Ethnic Directors Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, 1972.

HYPOTHESIS

If all other factors are held constant, (i.e., teacher-student relationship; time and days of course offerings, demands of courses on students, status of coursework as requirement or non-requirement, etc.) students of Black Studies will select courses on the basis of the degree to which they perceive relevance to their day-to-day needs. It was hypothesized that students would rank selection on the basis of personal needs number one more often than all other choices-

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

From the beginning of the Black Studies movement, concern has been expressed about the quality of the courses, the qualifications of instructors, and the performance of students. Critics charge that Black Studies courses are: (1) shallow and substandard, and designed for students who are unable to succeed in the "more rigorous, intellectually oriented" courses; (2) poorly conceived, irrelevant, parochial, and racist; (3) used as a forum or platform for political propaganda or for perpetuating myths; and (4) taught by instructors chosen for their ghetto and militant experiences rather than for their intellectual and educational accomplishments.[2] This report hopes to dispel these myths.

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[2]Lombardi, John and Edgar A. Quimby, Black Studies in the Community College: A Survey, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 048 851, 1971, p. 61.

Proliferation of courses, because it implies dilution in content and quality, has been as much a concern in Black Studies as it is in most disciplines. The urge to create new courses is difficult to resist. When all the courses in all the catalogs are enumerated, one may get the impression of proliferation. However, evidence as revealed in individual college catalogs does not indicate unusual activity in this regard. On the basis of this evidence, one may conclude that restraint, rather than proliferation, characterizes the Black Studies curriculum. It may be conjectured that restraint is related to the criticism leveled at quality and excellence.[3]

The early insularity of excluding white students from classes reflected adversely on Black Studies. It was assumed that black students did not want to expose the lack of depth of the courses and their inability to compete with white students. Today, this practice has almost disappeared. The trend seems to be in the opposite direction, encouraging white students to enroll.[4] At Santa Ana College, sixty-five percent of Black Studies students are white.

Since the community college comprises only the freshman and sophomore years, enrollment in Black Studies courses is likely to remain small. In two years, liberal arts students are not able or do not desire to take more than a few Black Studies courses in any discipline. Students majoring in the technical-vocational areas are more restricted (or more reluctant) than

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[3]Lombardi, John and Edgar A. Quimby, Black Studies in Community Colleges, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 055 579, 1971, p. 13 and 20.

[4]Ibid.

the transfer students to take more than one or two Black Studies courses. Transfer students who major in Black Studies take the most subjects in this discipline. Usually a major consists of a pattern totaling a least 20 semester units of approximately seven or eight courses of three units each. When a student takes an inter-disciplinary major combining Black Studies with a traditional field of study, the number of Black Studies courses in his program is likely to be smaller. These considerations, as well as those relating to the usefulness of the courses for degree, major, or transfer purposes, and the relative difficulty of the courses, availability in the schedule, and instructor appeal, all lead to the conclusion that Black students are as pragmatic as other students when chosing courses.[5]

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Students of Black Studies	All students who take Black Studies without regard to race or ethnic background.
2. Institutional Studies	Course and programs developed primarily to familiarize students with the nature and function of our society's institutions.
3. Black Studies Program	A unified approach to an inter-disciplinary study of the Black experience. The curriculum organization deals with the Black experience in Africa and America, with an emphasis on the latter. The American experience presents a perspective which includes historical, economic, political, sociological, and psychological investigations of the Black experience.

[5]Ibid. p. 13.

4. Dependent Variable	A factor that changes in response to changes in a correlated variable believed to be its cause.
5. Independent Variable	A factor whose change leads in a correlated variable.
6. Sampling Error	The difference between the true population statistic (e.g., the mean or the standard deviation) and the estimated value of that statistic in the sample.
7. Empirical	Concerned with data obtainable through observation.
8. Ethnic Group	A people with a common cultural tradition and sense of identity.
9. Institution	A cluster of roles that are of strategic significance to a society.
10. Political Institutions	A cluster of roles concerned with making binding decisions on behalf of the society. In a democracy, the incumbents of these roles are selected, directly or indirectly, by most of the persons bound by the decision.
11. Political Process	The policy making mechanism of interractive systems.
12. Reliability	The consistency with which trained observers can agree on a rating by a measuring instrument. A special instance of reliability is test-retest reliability, namely, the correlation between the scores of research subjects on successive administrations of a standarized test.
13. Total Institution	A service organization whose clients interact mainly within its context, e.g., prisons, hospitals, schools, law enforcement agencies, welfare agencies, military organizations, religious organizations, etc.
14. Subject Area	Courses of study in a particular academic or major area.
15. Definition of Variables:	
(a) Scheduled Class Period	The specific hour of the day at which the

		various classes are offered.
(b)	Instructor	The certificated staff member responsible for the operation and instruction of a course.
(c)	Difficulty Factor	The relative difficulty of a particular course, i.e., the amount of time and effort required to successfully complete the course.
(d)	Required Courses	Those courses which are required in order to satisfy a specific program requirement.
(e)	Electives	Those courses selected by a student on the basis of choice, generally selected from a cluster of certain types of courses to satisfy area and unit requirements.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has concerned itself only with Santa Ana College and its students. The researcher realized that institutions and student bodies differ in their needs (and desires) from campus to campus. Therefore, it will be necessary to seek out any weaknesses in curriculum development which might be unique to the community served by Santa Ana College.

A limitation of major concern is the inability to ascertain that informants have been accurate in their responses. Consideration was given to this problem in order that immediate use could be made of the findings, instead of using a longitudinal approach that would produce answers only when the need for them would no longer be a reality.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. That the Black Studies courses now offered at Santa Ana College have a reputation for academic excellence.

2. That students queried have dealt with inquiries at a serious level.

3. That students queried had basically the same academic background generally. That is, that they have been exposed to at least some Black Studies curricula, and to the same Black Studies faculty.

4. That interviewees were regular daytime, full-time students, as opposed to adult education or extended day students.

5. Coursework familiarizing students with institutions in their environment is synonymous to course work "relevant to their day-to-day needs".

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

Data was collected by use of the questionnaire. (Appendix I) One hundred full-time students of Black Studies were queried on their motivation for course selection. The questionnaire was given to students in six Black Studies classes within a period of five days. The one hundred students represented a random sampling from 500 students of Black Studies. The 500 students were numbered and four adjacent columns of digits from the table of random numbers was combined to provide a series of four digit random numbers. One hundred numbers within the 500 range were selected to serve as the sample.

In order to determine in which area of personal enrichment students saw the greatest need, a second questionnaire (Appendix II) was given to every student from the original 100. The questionnaire consisted of six areas of personal development.

PROCEDURES FOR TREATING DATA

The data was analysed to determine if under a common set of conditions, a students selected one general type of course over another. The controlled conditions were: 1. commonality of academic major, 2. accessibility to the same group of instructors, 3. accesibility to the same class scheduling, and 4. uniformity in the level of difficulty in course offerings. ON this basis, it is hoped that it can be determined if students choose Black Studies courses in certain areas more than in others because they feel a genuine need, and enroll accordingly.

The methodology involved a nonparametric statistical test, which is x^2 at the 1% level ($\alpha = .01$), since the independent variable is defined by nominal measurement.

DATA RESULTING FROM THE STUDY

(see Tables)

TABLE I

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Do you select Black Studies courses:

I. On the basis of the times they are scheduled?

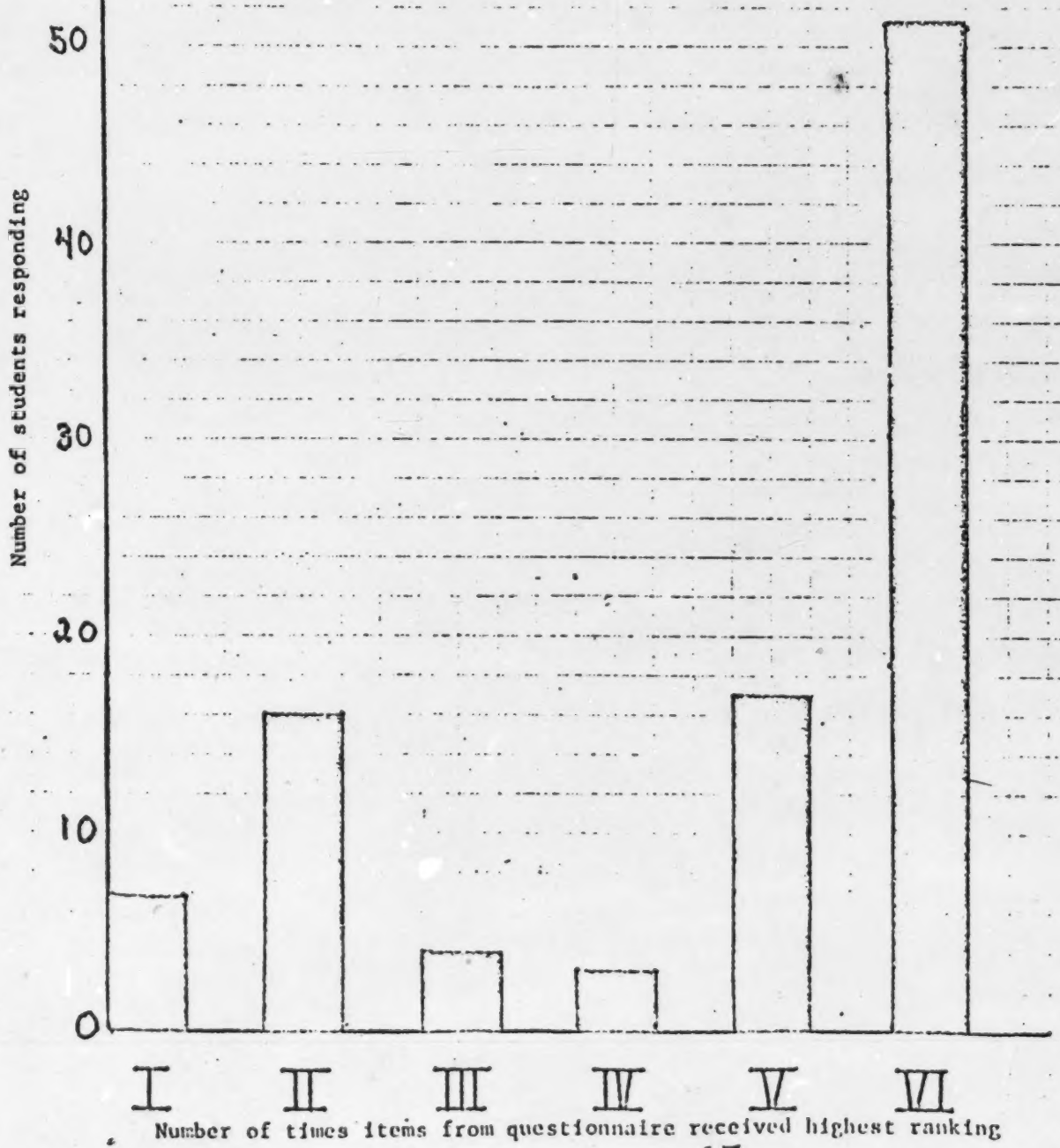
II. On the basis of the instructor who teaches the course?

III. On the basis of the relative difficulty involved with the course?

IV. On the basis of their status as elective courses?

V. Primarily to satisfy program requirements?

VI. Primarily to satisfy your personal needs, e.g., familiarization with institutions, etc.?



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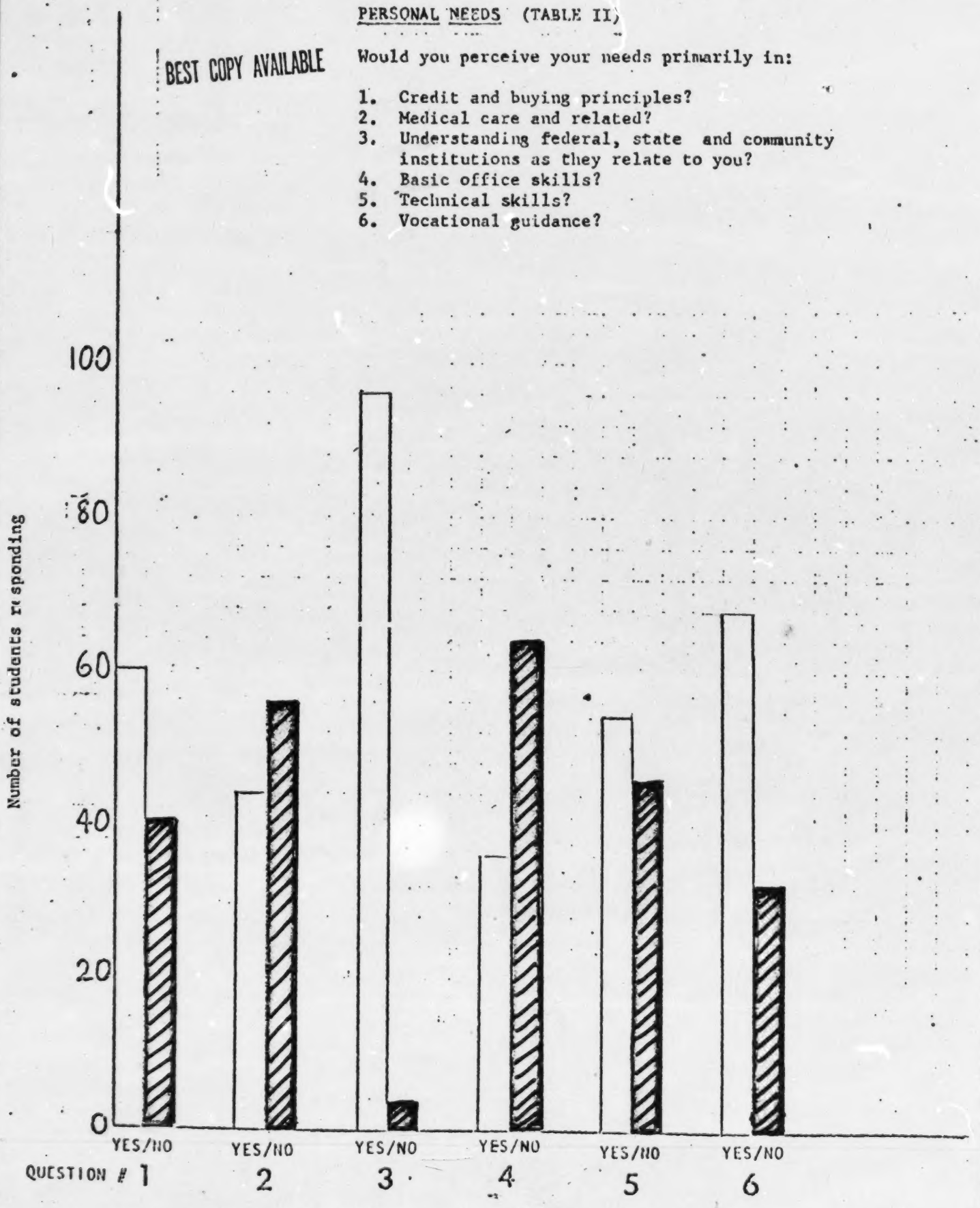
PERSONAL NEEDS (TABLE II)

Would you perceive your needs primarily in:

1. Credit and buying principles?
2. Medical care and related?
3. Understanding federal, state and community institutions as they relate to you?
4. Basic office skills?
5. Technical skills?
6. Vocational guidance?



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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DATA

The data indicates an overwhelming tendency of students to choose Black Studies curricula on the basis of the need to acquire a better understanding of the nature of institutions in their environments, and students' relationships with those institutions. The fifty-three percent of students who felt that course content was of primary concern represented a majority of all students responding.

The 17% of students who select Black Studies courses to satisfy program requirements may very well represent the most truthful faction responding. Though, in actuality, it might be expected that a larger number of students fall into this category.

It might also be expected that as many as sixteen percent consider the instructor the primary determining factor when choosing courses. This data should have far-reaching implications in the staffing process and staff development.

Of the six areas of personal development (Table II) the institutions category showed 28 more affirmative answers than the next nearest category.

YES	NO
96	4
(50)	(50)

○ Data = expected frequency

Data = observed frequency

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e-.5)^2}{e}$$

$$= \frac{(96-50-.5)^2 + (4-50-.5)}{50}$$

$$= \frac{(45.5)^2 + (-45.5)^2}{50}$$

$$= \frac{2070.25 + 2070.25}{50}$$

$$= 82.81$$

$$\alpha = .01$$

The result is significant at the 1% level, using X^2 as the staciscal test, indicating that the understanding of federal, state, and community institutions are perceived as needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Student response supported the hypothesis that students would rank number one course selection on the basis of personal needs to relate to institutions more often than all other choices. The greatest significance of the findings was the extent to which students regarded knowledge of institutions most important.

If the respondents have answered truthfully to the best of their knowledge, then the students are not selecting coursework for its simplicity, as is often charged. Students of Black Studies seem to be seeking increments to the existing curricula. They have not proposed a watering down of traditional programs to accommodate them. They insist upon raising, not lowering, the quality of education being offered them. Since the respondents remain anonymous, there is no reason to believe that a great number of them were reluctant to say outright that they choose courses because they offer no challenge.

There is recognition that the Black community relies heavily upon the community's institutions to provide the survival mechanisms for far too many of its members. There is equal recognition that because of their relative positions, (and because of the tendency to become calloused with regard to those to be served) there exists a formidable communications gap between institution and client. Thus, the Black community sees the necessity to develop and provide its own public servants (who may themselves become calloused after much disappointment and frustration).

Black Studies Programs are sometimes assigned the task of shaping a committed, educated elite. Just as Africans studying in British, French, and American universities in the pre-and post World War II period exchanged

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ideas, learned techniques and knowledge which they, as elites, have been applying in independent Africa, Black students represent an elite situated in a particular environment, the institution of higher learning, and in a position to learn, collaborate, and share ideas for the future betterment of society. As De Vere Pentony pointed out:

> The demand for Black Studies is a call for Black leadership. They (advocates of Black Studies Programs) seem to view the college or university as a place talents can be gathered and resources mobilized to provide intellectual leadership and academic respectability to their efforts. The college is to be the place for the writing of books, the providing of information and the training of students to help with the critical tasks. It is to be one of the testing grounds for the idea that Black people need to have control over their own destiny. (Pentony, D., 1969, p. 82)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the results of the questionnaires answered by the sampling of Black Studies students at Santa Ana College, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Curriculum Development - Immediate institutionalization of the following four courses:

Course One - The Black Experience

Course Description:

The course will consist of an examination of the personality patterns, psychological dynamics and socio-cultural styles which have emerged from the encounter of Black people with the American culture. Attempts will be made to define and discuss the implications of major psychological events, primarily within the recent and contemporary Black experience as they related to the developmental process, attitude formation, perceptual frames of references, identity patterns, internal versus external conflict, community institutions, music and literature.

Course Two - Urban Institutions

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide practical understanding or knowledge to the laymen in the function and usage of urban institutions. The course will provide for members of the Santa Ana Community a working knowledge as to what the various

community agencies provide in the way of service. The organizational structure will be examined so that the laymen will be able to derive maximum benefit from the many services available. Also, examination of the administrative policies and goals will provide tools for the laymen for effective utilization. The course will also examine projection for the future as to how the institutions are responding to a changing United States society.

The following institutions will be examined:

1. Human Resources Development (HRD) formerly, The Unemployment Office
2. Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) (formerly, The Welfare Department)
3. The Orange County Medical Center (OCMC)
4. The Office of Consumer Affairs - Salesmen and Consumer Fraud
5. Partners For Progress - Job & Job Counseling in the Black Community
6. The Peoples' Clinic - Community Mental Health
7. Creative Day Care Center - Child Development
8. Credit and Personal Financing - Truth in Lending
9. Insurance Companies (Fire, Auto, Life, etc.,)
10. Internal Revenue - Income and Tax Reporting - Practice filling out Forms
11. Police Department
12. Employment Agencies
13. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

14. Real Estate - The Art of House Buying - Tips on what the house buyer should look for when purchasing a home.

    Specific Steps

    1. Legal Implications
    2. Escrow

    Apartment Living

    Lease - Contract

    Purchasing - Condominum

    Tenants Responsibilities - Landlord Responsibilities (Legal)

15. Welfare Right Organization (WRO)
16. Fair Employment Practice Commission (FEPC)
17. The Board of Education
18. The Board of Supervisors - County Government
19. Small Claims Court - Procedure for Civil suits
20. The Community College - (SAC)

Course Three - Community Internship Program

Course Description:

Students enrolled in the Community Internship Program will be required to participate in on-site institutional study assignments. The student will be required to prepare a service proposal directed in the area of service delivery. The proposal will contain a definition of the problem and a methodology of solution.

Acceptable projects will include regular participation in such activities as tutoring, counseling, club or group leadership,

election campaign work or other community-oriented project.

Prospective students will be screened and selected. Each student will be interviewed and selection will be based on motivation and demonstrated interest in community affairs. Participants in the program will meet as a class frequently at announced intervals to review and analyze the philosophy and goals of volunteer service. The seminar-discussion will serve as a technique of project evaluation.

All participants will be required to submit an outline or workable program which specifically reflects the scope and range of their responsibilities to the agency. The outline will reflect personal goals and how they might benefit the agency. These written reports will be submitted to the instructor of the class. It will be reviewed and approved by the agency supervisor.

Program participants will be required at the end of the semester to make an oral report to the class, with a written rendition submitted to the instructor. This presentation will be a detailed analysis and critical review of their work and of the agency or service organization in which they participated. The institution's role as it relates to Santa Ana College and the community will be evaluated.

The instructor will provide guidelines for these service projects.

Course Four - Black Career Development

Course Description:

This course will provide a realistic program of career development to the Black Studies student. A personal inventory will be made on each participant. A realistic projection of the job market will be made. The student will be made aware of his available skills or his level of perceived mastery. The job market for Black people will be critically evaluated. The course will provide the student with a clear course of direction in the pursuit of a career objective.

Testing criteria will be discussed as to how they relate or do not relate to Black people as a result to cultural bias. The tests will be analyzed to determine how to take them and to review realistic expectation of successfully passing them, based upon educational and experimental requirements.

The class will review the occupational choices of Black people. Most importantly, the projected job field and the orientation of employers will be thoroughly examined.

2. Staffing - Inclusion of Black Studies students on screening committees for new staff members.

3. Program Requirements - Inclusion of a strong series of courses dealing with institutions in the program requirements.

4. Community Involvement - Articulation with local institutions which will participate in the institutions program by offering exposure for the students. Good rapport and coordination will be necessary to provide for continuity in such a program.

ideas, learned techniques and knowledge which they, as elites, have been applying in independent Africa, Black students represent an elite situated in a particular environment, the institution of higher learning, and in a position to learn, collaborate, and share ideas for the future betterment of society.[6] As De Vere Pentony pointed out:

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[6]De Vere Pentony, "The Case For Black Studies", in Atlantic Monthly, 233, pp. 81-89.

[7]Ibid.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

In rank order, 1-6, please answer by marking the appropriate rank number in the space which most describes your reasons for selecting Black Studies courses.

1. Do you select Black Studies courses on the basis of the times they are scheduled?

(7)

2. Do you select Black Studies courses on the basis of the instructor who teaches the course?

(16)

3. Do you select Black Studies courses on the basis of the relative difficulty involved with the course?

(4)

4. Do you select Black Studies courses on the basis of their status as elective courses?

(3)

5. Do you select Black Studies courses primarily to satisfy program requirements?

(17)

6. Do you select Black Studies primarily to satisfy your personal needs, e.g., familiarization with institutions, etc.?

(53)

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APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer "yes" or "no" to each of the following questions. Answers should reflect your perceptions as to needs for your personal development.

Would you perceive your needs primarily in the area of:

1. Credit and buying principles?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Medical care and related?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

3. Understanding federal, state and community institutions as they relate to you?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

4. Basic office skills?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Technical skills?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

6. Vocational guidance?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

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Lombardi, John and Edgar A. Quimby. Black Studies in the Community College: A Survey. U.S.: Educational Resources Information Center, 1971.

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